

LONG AND NELLUS CANYON WILDLIFE CORRIDOR DRAFT PROJECT PLAN

Project Site Description

The Long and Nellus Canyon Wildlife Corridor Project Plan (project plan) consists of approximately 330 acres comprised of 18 parcels located in the upper Santa Clara River watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County. The subject properties are on generally rugged terrain with high quality scrub habitat with riparian habitat along the creeks.

All of the project plan parcels are located south of the Antelope Valley Freeway (SR 14), east of Agua Dulce Canyon Road, west of the Pacific Crest Trail, and north of Soledad Canyon Road and the Santa Clara River. The parcels abut an 880-acre Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holding to the west and lie south of Vasquez Rocks County Park. The region is relatively undeveloped except for some homes to the west of the parcels with access from Briggs Road and development along the Santa Clara River to the south.

The property is part of major Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) being prepared by the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy in conjunction with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The whole of the property is in the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor within the most recent boundary expansion area.

The north-south oriented ownership provides a key wildlife movement corridor between the Sierra Pelona and San Gabriel Mountains which are separated by State Route (SR) 14. Intermediary to the two Agua Dulce Creek undercrossings beneath SR 14, the subject property abuts a large, 880-acre BLM holding. The northern parcels under a single ownership include a recently acquired easement across the Oasis Campground and the Santa Clara River to Soledad Canyon Road. To staff's knowledge, these are the only parcels in the general vicinity that have such an easement.

Long Canyon Creek and Nellus Canyon Creek flow through the properties south to their terminus with the Santa Clara River, just south of the project site. The creeks provide high quality riparian habitat. Each creek provides a separate undercrossing for the railroad tracks that run through the southern portion of the project site. These undercrossings are important for maintaining the viability of the wildlife movement corridor.

The parcels also provide excellent recreational opportunities. The dirt roads and trails on the project site connect the Santa Clara River to the Pacific Crest Trail. The Pacific Crest Trail runs through the adjacent BLM property. This trail system could be easily accessed by the public.

The project is in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Land Acquisition Workprogram under the name Soledad Canyon-Upper Santa Clara River Habitat Linkage. The subject parcels are within District 38 of Assemblymember Keith Richman, District 17 of the late

Senator William J. Knight, and the 5th District of Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich. No project opposition is expected.

Government Entities with Jurisdiction Over Project Area

Los Angeles County
California Department of Fish and Game
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

Planning Objectives and Principles Sought to be Achieved by the Project

The objectives of this project are (1) protection of an inter-mountain range wildlife movement corridor, (2) protection of a large undeveloped portion of a critical watershed, (3) protection of core habitat, (4) protection and restoration of sensitive and declining plant communities, and (5) providing public access and low-impact recreation. The project would implement the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Land Acquisition Workprogram 2000.

The project is also in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Per California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15316 the following is exempt: acquisition of land for the purpose of establishing parks, where the land is in a natural condition and either the management plan for the park has not been prepared, or the management plan proposes to keep the area in a natural condition. Acquisition of lands for wildlife conservation purposes (Section 15313) and transfer of ownership of interest in land to preserve existing natural conditions (Section 15325), are also exempt.

The project is consistent with all applicable land use plans and ordinances. It is also consistent with all relevant Los Angeles County ordinances and general plan documents. Amendments to local plans or the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan are not required.

Proposed Land Uses

The primary management objective will be the protection of the inter-mountain range wildlife movement corridor, to benefit the diversity of wildlife found in the region. Purchase of the property for public parkland will provide protection of native plant communities, wildlife habitat, and scenic viewsheds. Acquisition of the project plan area would also provide for public access and low-impact recreation. Existing trails and dirt roads on the project site connect to the Pacific Crest Trail across the adjacent BLM property. The project site also has a location that could provide a potential ranger residence. There is an existing pad and access

to electrical power and phone lines. If all or part of the project plan area is acquired, it would be managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). Eventually the area could be joined to the Angeles National Forest. Currently the Forest requires that added parcels be adjacent to federal ownership.

Detailed Site Analysis of Long and Nellus Canyon Wildlife Corridor Properties

(See also *Project Site Description*.) Eighteen parcels are located within the project plan boundaries totaling over 330 acres. A breakdown of the Assessor's parcel numbers and acres is provided in the following table.

Assessor's Parcel Number	Acres
3210-005-005	40.16
3210-005-011	10
3210-005-012	10
3210-005-013	10
3210-005-014	10
3210-005-015	8
3210-005-017	4.18
3210-005-018	4.34
3210-005-022	5
3210-005-023	5
3210-005-024	40
3210-005-025	40
3210-006-001	40
3210-006-004	20
3210-006-005	20
3210-006-006	30.05
3210-006-007	2.14
3210-008-022	31.59

The northern parcels (shown on Map 1) are some of the most buildable parcels in the region. The parcels are important to maintaining a wildlife movement corridor between the Sierra Pelona and San Gabriel Mountains. These parcels are generally composed of rugged terrain mostly covered mostly by scrub habitat with riparian habitat along the creeks. Access to the parcels could be obtained from Soledad Canyon Road by crossing the Oasis Campground and driving up Briggs Road.

Government Agencies, Organizations and Private Parties Consulted

Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, Frank Simpson
Scott Harris, Department of Fish and Game
Betty Courtney, Department of Fish and Game

Analysis of Economic Feasibility of Proposed Project

The northern group of parcels (shown on Map 1) are currently on the market for \$358,000. These represent the most developable area in the multi-thousand acre habitat area between the San Gabriel Mountains portion of the Angeles National Forest and SR 14. The proposed acquisition would be funded by up to \$208,000 of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's eligible in lieu mitigation fee funds; any remaining cost up to \$150,000 would be subject to a pending MRCA grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 40 funding. The mrca has authorized acquisition of these 13 parcels.

The southern group of parcels (APNs 3210-006-004 through 3210-006-007 and 3210-008-022 shown on Map 2) are proposed to be acquired by the MRCA with riparian in lieu fee mitigation funds. The asking price of three of these parcels has not been confirmed. The asking priced for APNs 3210-006-006 and 3210-006-007 is \$235,000 for 32 acres. The MRCA has authorized acquisition of these two parcels. Funding for the remainder of parcels is also expected to come from riparian in lieu mitigation funds.

Acquisition of all parcels is of course subject to and contingent upon an approved appraisal. Use of in lieu fee mitigation funds for the acquisitions is subject to the approval of the permitting agencies, namely the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and/ or the Regional Water Quality Control Board.